

Service Date: October 22, 1998

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SERVICE REGULATION
BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
OF THE STATE OF MONTANA

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In the Matter of the Pass Through of Fees)	UTILITY DIVISION
Levied on Regulated Companies for Funding)	DOCKET NO. D98.10.248
the Montana Consumer Counsel.)	ORDER NO. 6110

FINAL ORDER

1. Section 69-1-223, MCA, provides for funding the office of the Montana Consumer Counsel (MCC) by a fee on all regulated companies (as defined in . 69-1-201(3), MCA). The Department of Revenue has notified the Public Service Commission (PSC) of the tax rate which will be effective for the period beginning October 1, 1998 and ending September 30, 1999. Section 69-1-224(4), MCA, requires that the PSC “by separate order authorize each regulated company to fully recover in its rates and charges, on an annual basis, the fees levied . . .” This Order is being issued pursuant to that requirement.

2. Order No. 6014, issued September 22, 1997, authorized regulated companies to increase rates and charges for an annual period from October 1, 1997 through September 30, 1998. The authorized rate during that period was .07 percent (.0007).

3. The applicable rate for the tax period beginning October 1, 1998 is .1 percent (.001). In order to permit full recovery of the MCC fees, this Order permits all regulated companies affected by this Order to reflect this tax rate in their revenue requirement as of October 1, 1998.¹ All rate regulated companies that pay the MCC fee may file tariffs reflecting the .1 percent tax rate.

4. On September 30, 1998 the authorization granted to regulated companies by Order No. 6014 to recover a tax rate of .07 percent (.0007) expired. However, because the new

1 “[R]egulated companies affected by this Order” means those companies that are rate regulated by the PSC. Other companies regulated “in any manner” (. 69-1-401(2), MCA) by the PSC are subject to the MCC tax but do

rate represents an increase over the previous rate, those rate regulated companies whose current tariffs are premised in part upon the .07 percent rate are not required to file new tariffs reflecting the expiration of that authorization. This Order is authorization for those companies currently recovering the .07 percent rate to either continue that recovery, or to file new tariffs reflecting recovery at a .1 percent rate. For rate regulated companies the filing of tariffs reflecting the rate authorized by this Order is permissive, not mandatory. Regulated companies may choose not to recover the MCC tax, or may choose to recover only a portion of the tax, in cases where the amount to be recovered would not justify submitting new tariffs. A rate regulated company may choose to defer implementing tariffs reflecting the tax until a later date (e.g., to coincide with other tariff changes). It should be noted, however, that the revenue requirement may not be accumulated unless authorized by the PSC.

5. This Order is issued after the expiration of Order No. 6014, and after the effective date (October 1, 1998) of the new .1 percent tax rate. Therefore, regulated companies that file new tariffs to reflect the .1 percent rate may calculate those tariffs to account for MCC tax revenue requirement from October 1, 1998 to the date new tariffs are filed, not later than December 1, 1998.

6. All regulated services of a regulated company must absorb the rate increase proportionately to that service's contribution to the total gross operating revenue generated by the regulated activities within this state. As limited exceptions to this general approach, however, the floors in "flexible band" tariffs need not be exceeded and special market-based rates need not be increased.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. Pursuant to . 69-3-102, 69-12-201, 69-13-201, 69-14-111, 69-8-101 through 69-8-503, 69-3-801 through 69-3-862, and 69-3-1401 through 69-3-1409, MCA, the Montana Public Service Commission has jurisdiction over regulated companies as defined at . 69-1-201, MCA.

2. The Public Service Commission is required by Section 69-1-224(4), MCA, to allow immediate recovery of the regulated utility fee by each affected company in its rates and charges on an annual basis.

3. This Order does not apply to companies not rate regulated by the PSC.

4. The increased revenue requirement approved herein is a reasonable means of complying with . . 69-1-223 et seq., MCA.

ORDER

Regulated companies as defined in . 69-1-201, MCA, are authorized to file tariffs reflecting an MCC tax rate of .1 percent effective October 1, 1998 through September 30, 1999, consistent with the Findings of Fact contained in this Order. This authorization is permissive, not mandatory and effective dates may, at the companies' discretion, be after October 1, 1998.

Tariffs must be filed within fifteen (15) days of their proposed effective date if the effective date is after the service date of this Order. If the effective date is prior to the service date of this Order, tariffs must be filed by December 1, 1998.

DONE AND DATED this 21st day of October, 1998 by a vote of 5-0.

BY ORDER OF THE MONTANA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

DAVE FISHER, Chairman

NANCY MCCAFFREE, Vice Chair

BOB ANDERSON, Commissioner

DANNY OBERG, Commissioner

BOB ROWE, Commissioner

ATTEST:

Kathlene M. Anderson
Commission Secretary

(SEAL)

NOTE: Any interested party may request the Commission to reconsider this decision. A motion to reconsider must be filed within ten (10) days. See ARM 38.2.4806.